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To
Joannah Henson
from
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" J. Henrietta Plot
Sept^r 22^d 1817

AN

ESSAY ON BAPTISM.

SECOND EDITION.

Plummer and Brewis, Printers, Love-Lane, Eastcheap.

AN
ESSAY ON BAPTISM:

IN WHICH
IT IS ATTEMPTED TO BE PROVED,
THAT

BAPTISM

Administered by the sprinkling or pouring of Water

IS A SCRIPTURAL MODE:

AND THAT
THE INFANT OFFSPRING OF BELIEVING PARENTS
ARE PROPER SUBJECTS

OF THIS ORDINANCE.

BY
DANIEL TYERMAN.

SECOND EDITION, WITH ADDITIONS.

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PREFACE.

THERE is no doctrine without its difficulties; no truth but may be controverted. It is not therefore any difficulty opposed to the reception of a given truth, that should make us abandon it. Were we to renounce the sentiments we have adopted, merely because a few individuals may have determined to start objections against them, we might be ever learning, but should never come to the knowledge of the truth. Each doctrine of the Gospel is a whole composed of various parts; and all these parts are to be embraced, in order to a reception of the whole. For instance; when I acknowledge the truth of the baptism of adults by immersion, it appears to me that I acknowledge a part of the doctrine of Baptism only. But if I am resolved to receive all the various parts of this doctrine, I shall embrace also the baptism of infants by sprinkling, as this is only another part of the same doctrine; for it by no means follows, that because the former is true, therefore the latter

is false.—It is this part of the doctrine which is defended in the following Essay ; for the former requires no proof, as its propriety under certain circumstances is not controverted.

A mind determined to exercise its native prerogatives, and to close its researches in a rational decision, will weigh the evidence adduced in the balance of the sanctuary, and receive or reject accordingly. Let us apply this observation to the case before us. Unless the objector can sap the foundation of all the following arguments, and produce arguments in favour of the other scheme, more cogent, better supported, and which prove that the baptism of infants by sprinkling is unscriptural, in order to act with consistency, he ought to receive also that part of the doctrine which is here defended ; otherwise he attaches himself to that which, at most, is but a part of the truth, whilst he rejects that which he cannot disprove ; than which, nothing can be more absurd.

Much talent has been employed in this controversy, and several books produced worthy the attention of the scholar and the critic. It is not to decry these works that the author of this Essay has employed his pen. Having devised a method of treating the subject, which, so far as he is acquainted with the controversy, is new, and adapted to common minds, he has pursued it ; and an impartial public must deter-

mine with what success. It is not men, but principles which are opposed: and an opposition to PRINCIPLES, which all hold as non-essential, by no means supposes a want of Christian affection to the PERSONS of those by whom they are maintained. Whatever difference there may be amongst Christians in this respect, brotherly love should yet continue; and it is hoped that nothing in these pages will have a contrary tendency. (Firmness, without arrogance; decision, without bitterness; and argument, without sophistry, have been, at least, attempted through the whole.)

In stating and illustrating the following arguments, the utmost brevity, consistent with perspicuity, has been observed. An ornamented style is not the style of controversy. Argument never appears more forcible than when stript of every thing adventitious, it presents itself before us in the simple dignity of reason:—this is the author's apology in modern times for plainness of speech. With respect to the subject, it is necessary to observe, that each argument appears to the writer conclusive; but when the whole are collected, like so many sun beams, into one focus, they will be found, it is hoped, to throw a clearness of evidence on the truth, which will enable the dimmest eye, if not hoodwinked by prejudice, to behold it with ease. It

was found difficult to compress the discussion within the present limits. However, nothing has been omitted which appeared necessary, whilst every thing was rejected which was deemed superfluous.

This Essay was not begun with any view to publication, but merely to gratify the wishes of a kind friend, with whom the author had conversed on the subject. The favourable opinion of many who have seen it in manuscript, the frequent solicitations of friendship, an ardent desire of usefulness, and a concern to inform the ignorant and settle the wavering, have united their respective energies to force it into public attention. And should God be glorified, and any of his people benefited by this publication, the author will be amply rewarded.

D. T.

Newport, Isle of Wight.

ADVERTISEMENT.

TO THE SECOND EDITION.



THE approbation which this small work has received from the religious public, has very far exceeded the most sanguine expectations of the author. The large edition, which he was advised to print, has sold in a much shorter period than his fears had prescribed; and another edition is loudly demanded: since its publication he has solicited the criticisms of the most intelligent on both sides of this controversy, with whom he has had an opportunity of conversing; but he has met with nothing to make him question the validity of his arguments, or to render any important alterations or additions necessary. The few which have been introduced tend, however, to set some points in a clearer light, and to give greater effect to some of the conclusions which his data furnish.

However important every divine institution may be, so much stress ought not to have been laid on that in question, as obviously has been by many who take the opposite side. The frequent controversy which they have excited, and the zeal which they have discovered in the defence and propagation of a favourite tenet, have raised it to a disproportionate elevation, and rendered it more prominent than some other topics of essential moment. By this means it has been made to take the precedence of those doctrines which lie at the foundation of human hope, in the estimation of the unthinking, to

the no small injury of those who only "see men as trees walking."

While the author has met with nothing to make him suspect the force, and scriptural energy, of his ARGUMENT, he feels peculiarly grateful, that as little objection has been raised against the SPIRIT which it breathes. Though he differs from many whom he loves, he sincerely wishes to preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. He feels, indeed, that decision which every man should feel who meets his antagonist on controverted ground, yet he hopes he can say with confidence, that no unhallowed passion has guided his pen, nor any improper motive influenced his conduct; and he is happy that the dispositions which he has felt have been rendered sufficiently apparent to be recognized by his readers.

With what meekness and humility ought those to differ from each other on difficult subjects, who see but in part, and know but in part! How incompatible is it with that spirit of love and forbearance which the followers of Jesus mutually owe to unchristianize each other, because they differ on topics not essential to either vital or doctrinal christianity; and to make that a condition of church fellowship, which is not revealed as such in the oracles of God! The day is not remote when the disciples of Christ will more wisely appreciate their differences, and when mutual love will be the most prominent characteristic of the church of God.

"Fly swiftly round, ye wheels of time,
And bring that welcome day."

*Newport, Isle of Wight,
March 25, 1814.*

THE AUTHOR.

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AN ESSAY, &c.

WHAT is truth? is a question which every man should propose to himself when he enters the regions of controversy. The inquiry implies, or ought to imply, that the mind is open to conviction, and ready to embrace truth on whatever side evidence may bring it to view. Impartiality is an essential qualification in this pursuit: the want of it leaves the mind under the dominion of prejudice, insensible to the force of argument, and the easy prey of error. In all our inquiries, our solicitude should be proportioned to the importance of the subject. Different truths have their different degrees of consequence. Some have an immediate connexion with our present and eternal felicity, such as repentance, faith, the atonement, and holiness. In all inquiries relative to these subjects, the mind ought to feel the greatest concern:—and that soul must be awfully stupified that does not.—There are other subjects less clear, and more open to controversy, on which the mind may feel abated eagerness, but not indifference, especially if they affect Christian union,

and the peace of the Christian church:—and such is BAPTISM, the subject discussed in the following pages.

Scarcely has any controversy separated Christians more, and been productive of a smaller portion of good to the church of Christ in modern times, than this. Many books have been written, some to agitate the question, others to send it to repose; but most of them have been too large and abstruse for common readers to give them a clear view of the arguments on either side. Obscurity and virulence have been too often associated, evil tempers generated, and but little done for the cause of the great Redeemer. But truth needs not the unhallowed weapon of angry passion in its defence: it only asks a mind open to conviction, and a heart in love with its dictates, to ensure a triumph. Laying aside, therefore, all the jargon attendant on unchristian disputation, I shall attempt to give a fair statement of the arguments in favour of that side of the question which I conscientiously embrace. If candour influence the reader's mind, he will confess, that the writer's conduct is not without support; and that strong arguments indeed must be produced on the other side, to overthrow his system, or criminate his practice.

Before he proceeds on this subject, the reader ought clearly to understand, that there is no dispute between those who practise Infant Baptism^a, and those who differ from them,^b whether adult believers,

^a Pædobaptists.

^b Antipædobaptists, or Baptists.

who have not been baptized in their infancy, be proper subjects of baptism; this both parties maintain, and in such a case, practise. Neither is there any difference between them respecting the validity of Baptism administered by immersion; here also they are agreed.—Let this be well understood, and then it will follow, that any passages of scripture which may be produced relative to the baptism of adults, or to immersion, (if there be any such) have nothing to do with this controversy, as they would only tend to prove what both equally maintain.—The only points in dispute are, WHETHER BAPTISM ADMINISTERED BY THE SPRINKLING OR POURING OF WATER, BE A PROPER MODE—AND WHETHER THE INFANT OFFSPRING OF BELIEVING PARENTS PROFESSING CHRISTIANITY, BE PROPER SUBJECTS.—It is to these two particulars I shall confine my attention in this Essay. I shall begin,

FIRST, with the MODE, or manner in which Christian Baptism may be administered.—Is it essential to Christian Baptism, that it should be administered by dipping or immersion? Or, is not the sprinkling or pouring of water in the name of the sacred Trinity, deemed, with equal propriety, scriptural Baptism?—In defence of the latter, I offer to serious consideration the following arguments, which, taken collectively, I think sufficient to justify the conduct of those who administer this ordinance by sprinkling.

ARGUMENT 1.

THERE IS NO PASSAGE IN THE SACRED SCRIPTURES FROM WHICH IT CAN BE PROVED, THAT A SINGLE INDIVIDUAL WAS EVER BAPTISED BY IMMERSION.

TO some, this may appear a bold assertion; but a brief consideration of those passages of scripture which are commonly adduced in favour of Immersion, will establish its truth.—It has, indeed, been frequently said, that it is a positive command of Jesus Christ that adult believers only, should be baptized by dipping: but let it be remembered, that there is no such command in all the sacred volume, either expressed or deducible by fair inference. We are aware that it is said, “ Repent and be baptized,” “ He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,” &c. yet here is no mode of baptism mentioned, either dipping or sprinkling.

There is no proof that John ever administered baptism by immersion. We see no evidence that he immersed our Lord.^a It is said indeed that after he was baptized of John, “ Jesus went up straightway out of the water:” but this proves nothing more, than that he left the water, or went from it; for the same

^a Matth. 3. 13—16.

word here rendered "OUT OF," is very frequently translated, "FROM." There is nothing in the whole transaction which proves that Jesus was dipped.—John's baptizing the people in Jordan,^b does not prove that any of them were immersed. The original preposition signifies AT, as well as IN.^c But suppose it were IN Jordan, it cannot be inferred, without violence put upon the words, that it was by immersion. And when we consider the vast multitudes that came to his baptism, it seems impossible for John to have immersed them.—John's baptizing in Enon,^d because it is said "There was much water there," by no means proves that any were dipped. The learned KNOW that the passage may be translated, "Because there were many waters or rivulets there." The place was undoubtedly convenient for the purpose of baptizing, but there is NO PROOF WHATSOEVER that any one of those rivulets was sufficiently deep for immersion. Besides, could it be proved that John baptized by immersion, (which is impossible,) it would be no proof that this mode of baptizing ought to be practised now, for nothing is more clear than that John's baptism was not Christian baptism; this is proved by Acts 19. 1—5.

It cannot be proved that Philip dipped the Eunuch.^e We know it is said that "They both went

^b Matth. 3. 5, 6.

^c The same preposition is translated AT, Eph. 1. 1, 2, 12. Phil. 1. 2. Colos. 1. 2. 1 Cor. 1. 1. 2 Cor. 1. 1. and in many other places in the New Testament.

^d John 3. 23.

^e Acts 8. 36—40.

down into the water, and both came up out of the water," but we have no more evidence that the Eunuch was dipped than that Philip was, for what is said of one is said of both. But to suppose that Philip was immersed, is to suppose an absurdity.— Besides, it cannot be proved from the words of the original, (and we must criticise upon the original words in cases of difficulty, and not upon those of a translation,) that they even went into the water or came out of the water. Nothing more can be proved than that they went **TO**, and came **FROM** the water.^f On these words the learned Dr. Lardner makes the following judicious remarks. "I do not see any proof that the Eunuch was baptized by immersion." "He and Philip went out of the chariot to the water, and stood in the water, and Philip poured some of the water upon him. To be baptized in the chariot was unbecoming the solemnity of the ordinance. It was proper to go out and stand, and make a solemn profession of faith, and be initiated by Philip. All the reasonings of Mr. B—— and others for immersion, taken from the Eunuch's getting out of the chariot, have appeared to me inconclusive, not to say weak and trifling. Nor do I see reason to think that John the Baptist used immersion, but rather otherwise." "Among all the washings and purifications (called divers baptisms by the apostle) in the Old Testament, there is not, I suppose, one instance of

^f Acts 8. 38.

any person being dipped or immersed by another. It is contrary to decency, and to the respect we owe to one another.”^g

Having considered those passages which are usually adduced as proofs that the primitive mode of baptizing was by immersion—and shown that they afford no proof whatever that any such mode was practised;—I shall now notice those texts which have been supposed by some to have an allusion to immersion as the mode of baptizing, and shall attempt to make it appear, that they have no allusion to ANY mode, and consequently, that they afford no proof in favour of dipping.

That which is most commonly adduced, is a passage in Paul’s Epistle to the Romans.^h In this text, the most superficial observer must see, that the Apostle is treating on the work of sanctification, as a consequence of our union with Christ, which union is considered under the idea of a being grafted or planted into Christ, of which Baptism is the sign and seal. In the third verse, the Apostle says, “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death?” In understanding this passage, it is of essential importance that we recall to mind the idea of initiation, for which Baptism is administered. For

^g Letters to and from Dr. Doddridge, published by Thomas Stedman, page 234.

^h Rom. 6. 1—11.

by Baptism we are initiated into the religion of Christ, and all the blessings procured by his death. This is evidently the idea of the Apostle, for he explains what he means in the fifth verse, where he says, "If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." Thus what the inspired Paul considered before, a being baptized into Christ, he here calls a being planted in the likeness of his death.—Carrying on the same idea of initiation, which is done by Baptism, he observes in the fourth verse, "Therefore we are buried with him by Baptism into death;" by what are we buried with Christ into death?—by Baptism. Baptism then is the instrumental cause merely, or the rite of initiation into all the benefits of the crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection of Christ: that "Like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also," who have been united to Christ, of which union baptism is an emblem, "Should walk in newness of life." Christians being thus united to Christ, are said to be crucified, to be buried, and raised with Christ; and from this consideration, the Apostle enforces the necessity of crucifying the old man, dying to sin, and living to Christ in newness of life.—Though the Apostle alludes to Christian Baptism, he evidently alludes to no mode, either dipping or sprinkling, and therefore this text has nothing to do with the controversy.

The sentiments of Beza on this passage, correspond with what has been advanced. "There are (says he) three parts of this sanctification, to wit, the death of the old man or sin, his burial, and the resurrection of the new man descending into us from the virtue of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, of which benefit, our baptism is the sign and pledge." To the same import are the words of Dr. Evans, Mr. M. Henry's continuator. He observes—"It is plain that it is not the sign, but the thing signified in Baptism, that the apostle here calls being buried with Christ; and the expression of burying, alludes to Christ's burial: as Christ was buried, that he might rise to a new and more heavenly life: so we are in Baptism buried, that is, cut off from the life of sin, that we may rise again to a new life in faith and love."

That Baptism is used as a sign or emblem of our introduction to the benefits of the Redeemer's mediation, is clear. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ:"ⁱ where the word "baptized" is evidently used for initiation or introduction to the benefits of Christ's glorious undertaking; for in Baptism, the person renounced Judaism and Heathenism, and put on a profession of Christianity.

The above reasoning applies with equal propriety to another passage in the Colossians^k of the same

ⁱ Gal. 3. 27.

^k Colos. 2. 11, 12.

import, and where the Apostle is treating on the same subject; it is therefore unnecessary to enlarge upon it.

Nothing favourable to immersion can be inferred from a passage in Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians,¹ where he says, "All our fathers (and their little ones were included^m) were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." No one, I presume, will bring this text as a proof of dipping. For those persons were only baptized unto Moses, not unto Christ. And if there be any allusion to the mode of Baptism, it is certainly in favour of sprinkling:—the cloud came upon them, and the water stood as a wall on the right hand and on the left. The moisture of the cloud might sprinkle the people, and the wind might carry some of the spray of the sea upon them; but none were dipped on this occasion but Pharaoh and his host who sank like lead in the mighty waters.

Some have supposed, with no more evidence, that Peter alludes to the mode of Baptism, when he speaksⁿ of the "Ark, wherein eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto, even Baptism, doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Peter here evidently speaks of a

¹ 1 Cor. 10. 1, 2. ^m Exodus, 10. 9, 10. ⁿ 1 Pet. 3. 20, 21.

resemblance between the ark and the ordinance of Baptism, and not between the ark and water. And what Baptism does the Apostle mean? Not mere outward Baptism, or “The putting away of the filth of the flesh,” but that which is signified by it, that is, a real and spiritual renovation of soul, or, “The answer of a good conscience towards God.” The ark, wherein Noah and his family were saved, was a type of the covenant of grace, whereby all the elect of God are saved:—into which they are brought when their hearts are changed by the Baptism of the Holy Ghost, of which, outward Baptism is the sign and seal. “And so it was the ark, and the safety of those which were in it, and not the water, that prefigured the gospel salvation in Christ, as signified by Baptism, by means of which, when the thing signified by it is found in us, through faith in him, we are saved.”^o Here is, then, no allusion whatever to any MODE, but merely to the ORDINANCE of Baptism.

“I deny not,” (says Dr. Owen) “but that there is a great allusion in general between salvation by the ark, and that by Baptism, inasmuch as the one did represent and the other doth exhibit Christ himself. But the Apostle hath a particular design in this comparison. For judgment by one universal deluge was then coming on the whole church and people of the

^o See Guyse on this place.

Jews ; but God would save a few by Baptism, that is, their initiation into Gospel faith and repentance, whereby they were separated from the perishing infidels, and were really and actually delivered from the destruction that befel them, as Noah and his family were in the ark." *

There are other passages^p which some have supposed to have an allusion to dipping—but such a construction is so forced, unnatural, and uncertain, that I do not think it necessary to consider them distinctly. The texts which I have noticed, are the strongest that can be brought in favour of immersion:—and not one of them amounts to ANY PROOF that it was the mode adopted in the days of the Apostles.†

* Dr. Owen on the Hebrews, vol. 4, p. 39.

^p Luke 12. 50. Mark 10. 38. 1 Cor. 15. 29.

† If this statement be just, and I will venture to say, that no one will PROVE to the contrary, the consequence must be that those who adopt dipping as the mode of baptizing, do so, not because they can PROVE it from Scripture, but because it is their OPINION that such was the mode. If it be a mere OPINION, then those who assert it to be a FACT err either through *ignorance*, or with *design*. If the former, then it follows that such persons ought to be silent, and differ from others with modesty; if the latter, then they deserve the severest reprehension, and forfeit their character as honest men.

ARGUMENT II.

THERE ARE MANY PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE, WHICH RENDER IT EXCEEDINGLY PROBABLE, THAT BAPTISM WAS ADMINISTERED IN SOME OTHER MANNER, AND NOT BY IMMERSION.

HAVING shown that there is no positive evidence in Scripture for immersion, I shall proceed to show that there is something which favours some other mode. In this argument, I shall consider the slightest evidence—that of PROBABILITY.

Had John baptized by immersion, his whole time must have been spent in it, and that would not have been sufficient. “There went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.”^a—No mode is here mentioned; but from the vast multitudes baptized by him, it is certainly most probable, that he baptized them by sprinkling or pouring. When the people came to John in the wilderness, they had no idea of being baptized by him, and therefore would not bring that change of clothing which was necessary for immersion. Imagination, indeed, would build a house on the banks of

^a Matth. 3. 5. 6.

Jordan, and provide it with all sorts of accommodations fit for immersion:—but, alas! this is only a castle in the air, the Scriptures give it no foundation.

On the day of Pentecost, “They that gladly received the word were baptized. And the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”^b A considerable part of the day must have elapsed before the baptizing commenced: and besides this, we hear nothing of their retiring from the place where they were met together, to any river or situation convenient for immersion. And is it not exceedingly improbable that about three thousand should be immersed in so short a time as part of a day?—When Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto the people, they believed, and “Were baptized, both men and women.”^c They came to hear Philip in a state of Heathenism, with various designs, and from various motives,—some to persecute, others to hear what the babbler should say, but none, I suppose, with any view of receiving the truth, or being baptized. We cannot imagine, therefore, that they brought suitable garments with them:—it is not conceivable that holy Philip would immerse “Men and women” indiscriminately, without clothing; neither can we think that they would be plunged in the clothing in which

^b Acts 2. 41.

^c Acts 8. 12.

they came, as it would have been highly dangerous to have worn it afterward. Admit that they were baptized by the sprinkling or pouring of water, and the whole becomes easy and plain: this solves every difficulty. Admit this or not, the mind unshackled by prejudice, will readily acknowledge, that strong probability favours sprinkling.

The next passage I shall mention, is that which relates to the baptism of the Jailor and his family.^d The earthquake having shaken the prison, and waked the Jailor, "He sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas; and brought them out. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes, and was baptized, he and all his straight-way; and when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced in God with all his house."—Here we meet with nothing that countenances the idea of immersion. This Baptism (it appears most likely) took place in the Jailor's house; for they were evidently brought into his house before, or how could they have spoken the word to all that were IN his house? "He took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes;" there is every reason to think that this kindness would be performed in his own house; which is a further

^d Acts 16. 27—34.

proof that they were baptized there, as this circumstance preceded their baptism. We hear nothing of their going to a river, neither can we suppose that the Jailor had conveniences for immersion in his house.— Besides, it was midnight; the Apostles were sore with the wounds they had received a few hours before; and can we think it probable that they would go and stand in a river in such circumstances, to baptize this family?

If we examine the circumstances attending the baptism of Paul,^e we shall see every reason to believe that he was baptised by sprinkling in a private house. After his conversion, he was taken to the house of Judas in the street which was called Straight, in the city of Damascus. Ananias having in a vision received a positive command from Christ to go to him there, he went, and found him in a very abject condition—blind, emaciated with three days hunger in which he neither did eat nor drink, and weakened by distress of soul. As soon as Ananias came into the house, “Putting his hands on him, he said, Brother Saul, the Lord (even Jesus that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest,) hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales; and he received sight forthwith, and arose and was baptized. And when

^e Acts 9. 8—19.

he had received meat, he was strengthened." From all this it is evident, that Saul was **IN THE HOUSE** of Judas when Ananias came to him ; that through the agitation of his mind, and three days hunger, his body was exceedingly weakened, and in a very unfit state to be immersed in cold water ; that there is no proof that he went out of the house to be baptized, but merely rose up from his seat, and stood up upon his feet, that the ordinance might be administered with due solemnity ; and that as soon as he was baptized, he received proper refreshment, and was strengthened : not a word is said intimating that he left the house to be immersed, or that Judas had any conveniences in his house for immersion. Surely here is every reason to believe that he was baptized by sprinkling ; at least, this is far more probable.

I shall only mention another instance, which is related in the next chapter.^f After his remarkable vision, Peter was sent for by Cornelius to his house. As soon as he came, he entered in, " And found many that were come together." Cornelius having related the reason of his sending for him, Peter began to address them, and preached to them the salvation of the Gospel. " While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. Then answered Peter, can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have

^f Acts 10. 19—48.

received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord." These persons were in the house of Cornelius; nothing is said about their leaving the house to go to a river to be baptized; nothing is mentioned about a baptistry in the house of Cornelius; Peter's observing—"Can any man forbid water," seems to intimate that water was brought to them into the house; and as they had just been baptized by the Holy Ghost, by his falling UPON them, I see no reason to doubt but that sprinkling or pouring water UPON them, was the mode here used, as this most resembled the thing denoted by it, that is, the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Surely the mind that takes an impartial view of this passage will confess, that the strongest probability is on the side of sprinkling.

From all these instances it appears exceedingly probable, that Baptism was administered in some other way, and not by dipping. All I plead for from these quotations is, that strong PROBABILITY favours sprinkling or pouring, and opposes immersion.*

* Some have referred to the authority of the Church of England in order to prove the necessity of immersion. But let any one only read over the Service of Baptism in her Prayer-Book, and he will see that the Church of England maintains that Baptism administered by sprinkling is scriptural, and consequently valid.

ARGUMENT III.

THE WORDS BAPTISM, BAPTIZE, BAPTIZED, ARE USED IN SCRIPTURE IN SUCH CONNEXIONS, AS RENDER IT EVIDENT, THAT THEY DO NOT ALWAYS MEAN TO DIP OR IMMERSE.

RESPECTING the import of the original word, the great Dr. John Owen makes the following observations, which deserve to be remembered. “No one instance (says that wise critic) can be given in Scripture, wherein BAPTIZO doth necessarily signify either to dip or to plunge.—It doth not signify properly to dip or plunge; for that in Greek is EMBAPTO^a and EMBAPTIZO. It no where signifies to dip, but as a mode of, or in order to washing.^b” This being a just statement of the import of the word, then it follows, that washing either by dipping, or sprinkling, or pouring, is baptizing.

It has often been said that the word BAPTIZO, the word always used by the sacred penmen when treating on the ordinance of Baptism, comes from BAPTO

^a EMBAPTO is translated to dip, Matth. 26. 23. Mark 14. 20. John 13. 26. N.B. This word is never used in reference to the ordinance of Baptism.

^b Collection of Sermons and Tracts, p. 581.

to dip; and that as BAPTO always signifies to dip, therefore BAPTIZO which comes from it, signifies always to dip also. This however is not true. Many instances might be adduced to prove that even BAPTO is often used by various authors in such connexions as render it certain, that they did not mean immersion. But let one instance suffice; it is taken from the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament into Greek, which is generally supposed to have been made about three hundred years before the Christian Æra. In this translation the word is evidently used to denote sprinkling, for it is employed to describe the manner in which Nebuchadnezzar's body was "Wet (EBAPHE) with the dew of heaven."^c This was certainly done by sprinkling, and not by dipping. And it is equally certain that the word BAPTIZO to baptize, is often used when it cannot mean to immerse. This even the learned themselves confess, who oppose baptizing by sprinkling. To prove this, I cannot quote better authority than Dr. Gale, who was unquestionably the most learned man who has stood forward to advocate the opposite sentiment. On observing that Aristotle describes a thing as baptised which was not put into the water, but the water came upon it, he remarked, "The word BAPTIZE, perhaps, does not so necessarily express the action of putting under water, as in general, a thing being in that condition, no matter how it came so." And in

^c Dan. 4. 33.

another place the thing baptised was only partially wet. On this fact the Doctor declares, "That the word does not always necessarily imply a total immersion of the whole thing spoken of, all over."^d After even Dr. Gale yields the point, who will be bold enough to maintain it?

Let us now see how these words are used in the New Testament. The Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews,^e speaking of the various Jewish cleansings, calls them "divers washings;" in the original it is "divers baptisms," or baptisms of different sorts; but if dipping were the only mode, there could not be DIVERS baptisms, but one only, and the Apostle is mistaken.

No one can maintain with any show of probability, that the word denotes immersion in the Gospel of Mark,^f where it is said, "When they come from the market, except they wash (in the original it is baptize,) they eat not; and many other things there be which they have received to hold, as the washing (baptizing) of cups and pots, brazen vessels and tables."—Some think that the word here rendered tables, signifies beds:—but whether it signify tables or beds it matters little, for we may consider it certain that they were not washed by dipping, but by pouring or sprinkling water upon them. Neither can we suppose from the above passage, that when they came from market they always

^d See Dr. Gale's Answer to Dr. Wall.

^e Heb. 9. 10. ^f Mark 7. 4.

dipped themselves in water before they eat.—“The Pharisees marvelled that Jesus had not first washed (baptized) before dinner.”^s—What sort of washing was that which the Pharisees expected Christ to perform? I answer, only the washing of his hands. This is evident from Mark 7. 3—5. “The Pharisees and all the Jews, except they wash (NIPSONTAI) their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the Elders. And when they come from market, except they wash (BAPTIZONTAI) they eat not. And many other things there be which they have received to hold, as the washing (BAPTISMOUS) of cups and pots, brasen vessels and tables. Then the Pharisees and Scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the Elders, but eat bread with unwashen (ANIPTOIS) hands.” In this passage we have a positive proof that NIPTO to wash, and BAPTIZO to baptize (the root from which the above words are derived) signify the same thing; and are used indiscriminately for each other:—the inference is plain, THAT WASHING IS BAPTIZING in whatever way it is done, either by dipping, or pouring, or sprinkling. It appears from “*Elisha’s* pouring water on the hands of *Elijah*,”^h that the hands were usually washed in this way; at least they may be thus washed, which was all that the Pharisees expected. In these passages the word “baptize” signifies washing in general, but does not specify any mode, either

^s Luke 11. 38.

^h 2 Kings 3. 11.

pouring, sprinkling, or immersion. In these cases, a little water, applied by sprinkling or pouring, would certainly wash (baptize) tables, &c. The sentiments of the most ancient christian writers certainly harmonize with these statements. ORIGEN, who lived within one hundred years of the Apostles, in allusion to the above fact says, "That when Elijah ordered water to be poured upon the wood, the wood was baptized." Baptism, and pouring water upon a thing or person, were the same in the estimation of this great man.

In the following passages it will still more clearly appear, that pouring is baptizing. After his resurrection our Lord commanded his disciples,ⁱ "That they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence." Reference is here undoubtedly made to the day of Pentecost, of which we have a particular account.^k "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it (the sound) filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." This is without

ⁱ Acti 1. 4, 5.

^k Act 2. 1—4.

doubt, the Baptism of the Holy Ghost which was promised them:—but how was this performed? Not by their being immersed in the Holy Ghost; for the cloven tongues sat UPON them.—This baptism Peter calls “pouring:”¹ “This is that (said he) which was spoken by the Prophet Joel.^m and it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh.” Baptizing with the Spirit is performed by pouring the Spirit UPON those who were baptized: the natural inference is, that pouring is baptizing.—To illustrate the nature of this Baptism of the Holy Ghost still further, Peter observes,ⁿ “He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear.” Here the Apostle calls the same Baptism, a “shedding forth,” and not immersion. In reference to the same Baptism, Peter says,^o “As I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell ON them, as ON us at the beginning.” Here the same Baptism is called a “falling on us.”—Again. While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell ON all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.”^p The use of water in the ordinance of Baptism is undoubtedly an emblem of the influences of the Holy Ghost on the soul: and the Scriptures speak of a similarity in the mode of ap-

¹ Ver. 17.^m Joel 2. 28, 32.ⁿ Acts 2. 33.^o Acts 11. 15, 16.^p Acts 10. 44, 45.

plication, as well as of the thing. This—"I indeed have baptized you with water; but he (Christ) shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost."^a But baptizing WITH water, is not applying the body to the water, but the water to the body of the baptized. This manner of speaking is very frequently used in the Scriptures.^r

If the word "baptize" signify invariably "to dip," then on all occasions, wherever the word occurs in the Scriptures, we may substitute dip, dipped, &c. and that substitution will make as good sense as baptize, baptized, &c. Let us then read a few passages where the word "baptize" is used, with this change. "I have dipped you with water, but he shall dip you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."^s "For by one spirit are we all dipped into one body."^t "As many as have been dipped into Christ have put on Christ."^u "John did preach the dipping of repentance."^w—"Preached the dipping of repentance for the remission of sins."^x To change the words would make a great many texts speak language as absurd as the

^a Matth. 3. 11.

^r Matth. 3. 11. Mark 1. 8. Luke 3. 16. John 1. 26. Acts 1. 5. 11. 16. I am aware that the preposition EN, in, is used in the above passages. But the Translators rendered it "WITH," being aware of the similarity between Baptism and the thing signified by it, and the absurdity that would follow upon translating it IN : in water, in the Holy Ghost.

^s Matth. 3. 11. ^t 1 Cor. 12. 13. ^u Gal. 3. 27.

^w Mark 1. 4.

^x Luke 3. 3.

D

above. The obvious reason is, the texts to which I have alluded, and a variety of others, have no reference to any mode, but simply and alone to the design of Baptism, namely, INITIATION, or an introduction into the church as its visible members.

From the whole I conclude, that the word “baptize” is often used in such connexions as render it evident, that it does not mean to dip or to immerse, but “to pour upon”—“fall upon”—“sit upon,” &c. Therefore immersion is not essential to Christian Baptism; and it is properly and scripturally administered by pouring or sprinkling.

ARGUMENT IV.

THE RIGHT PERFORMANCE OF ANY INSTITUTED ORDINANCE, DEPENDS NOT ON THE QUANTITY OF THE ELEMENT EMPLOYED, UNLESS THAT QUANTITY BE SPECIFIED BY THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH.

THE question here is, do the Scriptures speak of a quantity of water, sufficient for immersion, as being of essential importance to the right performance of the ordinance of Baptism? Surely not.

Let us here notice the other standing ordinance of the Christian Church, where visible elements are employed, I mean the Lord's Supper. Do the Scriptures speak of any given quantity of bread to be eaten, or wine to be drunk, in order to an acceptable performance of this important duty? No. If any given quantity had been of importance, the Head of the Church would certainly have inscribed it on the page of truth. But here the Scriptures are silent; excepting that they caution us against the abuse of that solemn institution by the use of so large a quantity, as would tend to gluttony and drunkenness. However small the portion, only let it be eaten and

drunk in remembrance of Christ, and it is well done.*

Had it been essential to the right administration of Baptism, that there should be water enough for the immersion of the subject, we may certainly infer, that it would have been recorded. To suppose such a quantity essential, but left unspecified by the Christian Lawgiver, would be a reflection on his wisdom, his justice, and his goodness. But the sacred Scriptures are perfectly silent on this subject also. Besides; there are reasons to suppose that Baptism was administered in private houses, as well as at rivers; where there could be but little, as well as where there was much water; and therefore we naturally and properly conclude, that whether there be enough for immersion, or only sufficient for sprinkling, is of no moment: only let it be administered in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and it is all the Scriptures require. On this subject, the famous WITSIUS makes the following remarks: "The communion in the thing signified, should not be rated by the quantity of the external sign. A very small

* This ordinance is called a SUPPER, which in common language conveys the idea of a MEAL; and we are said to partake of the Lord's Supper, though we eat and drink the smallest quantity of bread and wine. On the same principle, Why may we not consider a person baptized, though but a little water be applied by sprinkling?

portion of water may no less seal the abundance of divine grace in Baptism, than a small morsel of bread, and a sparing draught of wine in the holy supper."^a To make that essential to an ordinance which the oracles of God do not, argues the greatest pride in the person who makes the daring attempt.—If this argument be good, and who will PROVE it is not? then the use of a small quantity by sprinkling, is as valid as a great deal, which is all I contend for.*

^a Witsius's Economy of the Covenants, Vol. II. p. 436.

* It is not unfrequently said—"Of what use is a little water sprinkled upon the face?—To answer this question I need only propose another—Of what use is a great deal?"

ARGUMENT V.

THE SPIRITUAL TRUTHS INTIMATED BY BAPTISM, ARE GENERALLY DENOTED BY THE TERMS SPRINKLING, POURING, WASHING, SHEDDING FORTH ON, AND BUT SELDOM, IF EVER,* BY DIPPING.

BAPTISM presupposes the sinful, depraved state of man; it expresses the necessity of regeneration, and

* I know but of one place where the word "dip" is used with any apparent relation to purifying, and even there it is very doubtful. I mean the case of Naaman the leper, 2 Kings 5. 10—14. The Prophet Elisha told him to go and **WASH** in (or at) Jordan. The Septuagint translation makes use of the proper word **LOUO**, which is commonly used to denote "to wash" by the application of water in any mode; and the same word is used three times in this short history. When he complied with the Prophet's direction, he washed the part which was leprous, in the manner he was directed. And this is all that is meant by its being said "That he went and dipped himself seven times, according to the saying of the man of God." And the above translation uses the word **BAPTIZO** to denote this washing. N B. This is a further evidence that the word **BAPTIZO** signifies to wash in any mode, as **BAPTIZO** and **LOUO** are used to denote the same thing, i. e. to wash.

the removal of the impurity of sin by the sanctifying operations of the Spirit; and is the sign of especial dedication to God. If we open the sacred Scriptures, we shall see that these particulars are expressed by sprinkling, pouring, washing, shedding forth, &c.

Thus by SPRINKLING. "Take the Levites from among the children of Israel, and cleanse them. And thus shalt thou do unto them to cleanse them; SPRINKLE water of purifying UPON them, and let them shave all their flesh, and let them wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean."^a "So shall he SPRINKLE many nations."^b "Then will I SPRINKLE clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean."^c "If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, SPRINKLING the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, purge your conscience from dead works."^d "Almost all things are by the law purged with blood;"^e — In what manner applied? — "By SPRINKLING."^f — "Having our hearts SPRINKLED from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."^g "Through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and SPRINKLING of the blood of Jesus Christ."^h — "We are come to the blood of SPRINK-

^a Numbers 8. 6. 7.

^b Isaiah 52. 15.

^c Ezek. 36. 25.

^d Heb. 9. 13, 14.

^e Ver. 22.

^f Ver. 19. 21.

^g Heb. 10. 22.

^h 1 Pet. 1. 2.

ⁱ Heb. 12. 24.

LING, that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel."*

The same things are expressed by POURING UPON. "He shall pour (the oil) upon the head of him that is to be cleansed."^k "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my spirit upon thy seed."^l "And I will pour upon the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and supplication."^m

* The following serious observations made by the pious and learned Dr Owen, deserve the attention of those who treat the idea of sprinkling with such sovereign contempt as we find many do. "This rite or way of sprinkling, (says he) was chosen of God as an expressive token or sign of the effectual communication of the benefits of the covenant unto them that were sprinkled. (And children were amongst them.) Hence the communication of the benefits of the death of Christ unto sanctification is called the sprinkling of his blood, 1 Pet. 1. 2. And our Apostle comprizeth all the effects of it unto that end under the name of the blood of sprinkling, Heb. 12, 24. And I fear that some who have used the expression with some contempt, when applied by themselves unto the sign of the communication of the benefits of the death of Christ in Baptism, have not observed that reverence of holy things that is required of us. For this symbol of SPRINKLING was that which God himself chose and appointed, as a meet and apt token of the communication of covenant-mercy, that is, of his grace in Christ Jesus unto our souls." Owen on the Hebrews, vol. 3. page 435, folio edition.

^k Levit. 14. 18.

^l Isa. 44. 3.

^m Zech. 12. 10.

“ On the Gentiles was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.”^a

The same things are expressed by WASHING. “ Such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified—by the Spirit of our God.”^o “ Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins.”^p “ Having our bodies washed with pure water.”^q “ Christ loved the church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.”^r “ He saved us by the washing of regeneration.”^s “ Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, (wash) not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.”^t

The same things are expressed by SHEDDING FORTH, on us. “ He hath shed forth this (the Holy Ghost, the Baptism promised) which ye now see.”^u “ The renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.”^w

Several of the above passages have an allusion to the mode of Baptism by sprinkling, pouring, washing, shedding upon, &c. all which are called baptizing.* If there be a similarity between the

^a Acts 10. 45. ^o 1 Cor. 6. 11. ^p Act 22. 16.

^q Heb. 10. 22.

^r Eph. 5. 25, 26.

^s Tit. 3. 5.

^t John 13. 9.

^u Acts 2. 33.

^w Tit. 3. 5, 6.

* That shedding forth, falling upon, &c. are called baptizing is clear. Compare Acts 1. 5, with Acts 11, 15, 16. “ As I

mode of administering the ordinance of Baptism, and the manner of communicating the spiritual truths denoted by it, (which we may naturally expect there should be,) then we may conclude, that, when the Scriptures speak of the communication of these blessings it will be in terms of allusion to that ordinance by which they are represented:—this is done:—but the mode alluded to is sprinkling, pouring, washing, shedding forth:—we may therefore safely conclude, that water administered in any of these modes, is properly Baptism.

began to speak (said Peter) the Holy Ghost fell **ON** them, as **ON** us at the beginning. Then remembered **I** the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.

ARGUMENT VI.

THE SYSTEM WHICH MAKES IMMERSION ESSENTIAL TO BAPTISM, IS CONTRARY TO THE SPIRIT OF THE GOSPEL ECONOMY:—AS IT IS IN SOME CASES IMPRACTICABLE — AS IT IMPOSES WHAT SOME PROPER SUBJECTS ARE UNABLE TO BEAR —AS IT IS OFTEN DANGEROUS—AS IT APPEARS TO MANY HIGHLY INDECENT—AND AS IT OPPOSES CHRISTIAN INTERCOURSE.

IMMERSION is in some cases impracticable. There are places so destitute of water, excepting in deep wells, and that in very small quantities, that enough for immersion could not be obtained. This is evident from the testimony of travellers, who have penetrated the interiors of Africa and other hot countries, where the Gospel might be preached, and where souls might be converted to Christ, and made fit subjects for the kingdom of grace. MALTHUS, in his *Essay on the Principle of Population*,^a has the following remark: “The tribes of the desert (of Arabia) deny that the religion of Mahomet was made for them. For how, say they, can we perform ablutions, when

^a Page 93, second edition.

we have no water?" Might they not make the same objection to Christianity, if it were essential that they should be immersed in water, before they become members of the visible church?

Immersion is a yoke which some proper subjects are unable to bear. Suppose a person afflicted with certain complaints, in which plunging in cold water would endanger life:—And there are such cases:—Suppose such a person converted to Christ, and a proper subject for church fellowship, yet, on the exclusive immersion system, that felicity would be denied this real disciple, however holy; no place would be allowed in the church—no seat granted at the table of the Lord, to such an one. Would not this be afflicting the afflicted, by making that essential to communion, which the Scriptures do not, for the crime, pardonable at least, of not being able to endure immersion?—And is it not often dangerous also to the minister, who must frequently stand in the water a considerable time, to immerse, as well as to those who are to be immersed, as in cases of the above nature?*

The practice of immersion appears to many highly indecent. This would be universally confessed,

* Could it however be proved that immersion is essential to this ordinance, which has NEVER YET been done, all these dangers must be risked, and every thing unpleasant attached to immersion endured.

were the practice of dipping men and women indiscriminately, introduced into the public Theatres, and performed before the gazing thousands. And how much more so in a religious assembly, where all should be done “decently and in order,” and every thing excluded which would generate a single disposition contrary to the purity of the Gospel. May we not say with Dr. Lardner, in the quotation before made—“It is contrary to decency, and to the respect we owe to one another?”

And does not this system oppose Christian intercourse? * In heaven, all barriers to Christian communion are for ever done away. Nothing ought to be considered as essentially necessary in the church militant, which would separate those who are united to Christ, who agree in all essential points, and whose other sentiments are not contrary to peace and love. This serious objection lies against the system that makes immersion essential to Baptism and church fellowship, as it separates those whom the Lord hath joined. For though it is impossible to prove that sprinkling is not baptizing, yet a pious person thus baptized, and fully persuaded that it is a scriptural mode, would not be suffered to participate the

* I here make an honourable exception of those few churches of the Baptist denomination, which admit of mixed communion.

Lord's Supper with those who support this system. Surely this is to keep out those whom the Gospel invites in; and it throws a stumbling block in the way of the communion of saints, which is at once uncharitable, and contrary to the divine economy of that Gospel, which is designed to unite, and not to separate chief friends. "In my simple opinion," said good John Bunyan, who was himself an Antipædobaptist,* "your rigid, church-disquieting principles, are not fit for any age and state of the church. I say they are babes, and carnal, that attempt to break the peace and communion of churches, though upon no better pretences than *water*.—I am still of that mind, and shall be, so long as I see the effects that follow, viz. the breach of LOVE, taking off Christians from the more weighty things of God, and to make them quarrel and have heart burnings one against another."^b

* He did not consider immersion as essential to church fellowship—for he admitted of an open communion.

^b Works, vol. 1. p. 151, 153.

CONCLUSION.

Thus we see—that it is impossible to prove from the Scriptures that any individual was ever baptized by immersion—that many passages of Scripture render it exceedingly probable that Baptism was administered in some other way, and not by immersion—that the word “BAPTIZE,” is frequently used where it cannot mean to dip, but to pour or sprinkle—that the right performance of this ordinance does not require a quantity of the element sufficient for the immersion of the subject—that the spiritual truths denoted by Baptism are generally intimated by the terms sprinkling, pouring, washing, and shedding forth, on us, which appear to be allusions to the ancient mode of baptizing, but seldom, if ever, by dipping—and that the system which makes immersion essential to Baptism, is contrary to the spirit of the Gospel economy. From the whole I infer, that dipping the subject under water is not essential to Christian Baptism; and that Baptism administered by sprinkling or pouring is a scriptural mode.

THE

SUBJECTS OF BAPTISM.



HAVING considered the Mode of Baptizing, and produced sufficient evidence to justify the practice of sprinkling, I shall proceed to notice the SUBJECTS or persons to whom Baptism is to be administered; these are adult believers, who have not been baptized in their infancy, and the infant offspring of believing parents.—The reason why we read of so many adults who were baptized in the days of the Apostles, is evident: for those persons were converted from either Judaism or Paganism, and, of course, they could not have been baptized, with Christian Baptism, in their infancy, their parents being ignorant of Christ and all Christian institutions. Being converted to Christ in their adult years, it was requisite that they should be baptized in order to become visible members of the Christian church, as Baptism was the only rite of admission. When such persons offered themselves

to the Apostles as candidates for Baptism, it was necessary that the Apostles should be satisfied that they had renounced Judaism or Paganism, and embraced the Messiah: therefore they always asked such a candidate, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God? if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest be baptized." Hence the Apostles exhorted their hearers to repent of their past Heathenism and Judaism, and of their sins in general, and to believe the Gospel in order to be baptized; for it would have been the most consummate folly to have baptized them into the Christian faith before they had received Christianity. And let it be observed, that those who practise infant baptism now, make the same demands in similar circumstances, and require a profession of faith from adult candidates who have not been baptized in their infancy. But though such adults are proper subjects of Baptism, it would be groundless and unreasonable to infer from this consideration, that therefore infants are not.* A candid examination of the subject will make

* Groundless and unreasonable as this inference is, yet nothing is more common amongst those who oppose Pædobaptism. To maintain that because the baptism of adults is right in certain circumstances, THEREFORE the baptism of infants is always wrong, would be as presumptive as to maintain that because adults dying in certain circumstances are assuredly saved, therefore no infant can be saved; the reason of the absurdity is, because when we admit the salvation of adults, we say nothing against the salvation of infants. So

it appear, that THE INFANT OFFSPRING OF SUCH BELIEVING PARENTS ARE EQUALLY ENTITLED TO THE ORDINANCE OF BAPTISM. To make this clear, I offer the following arguments.

when we have proved the baptism of adults, we have advanced nothing against the baptism of infants, as the truth of the former by no means militates against the admission of the latter.

ARGUMENT I.

THERE IS NOTHING IN THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
THAT REALLY OPPOSES INFANT BAPTISM.

COULD an express prohibition of infant Baptism be brought from the word of God, or an inference drawn from positive premises, which was absolutely conclusive against the baptism of infants, this controversy would no longer afflict the church: all real Christians would be of the same mind: but this is impossible: the sacred Scriptures have no such prohibition, they warrant no such conclusion.

It argues nothing against this practice to say, that faith and repentance were required of adults in order to Baptism; and as infants cannot exercise either faith or repentance, therefore infants have no right to Baptism.* All that this proves is, that a profes-

* Great stress has been laid by some persons of weak minds on the order of the words "Repent and be baptized," from which they have supposed that repentance must precede Baptism, and have inferred that as infants are incapable of repenting, therefore they are unfit subjects for Baptism. I wonder that those persons should hold the necessity of conversion in order to Baptism: "It is said, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the

sion of faith and repentance was, and is still necessary from those who are converted from Judaism and Heathenism to Christianity, in order to Baptism, which no one denies. But to assert, that as infants are incapable of faith and repentance, therefore they ought not to be baptized, is not solid reasoning, because it is a conclusion which the premises do not justify, as there is nothing about infants in the premises. By this mode of argument we may easily prove that all the infants that ever existed, dying in their infancy, are sent to everlasting perdition; for the Scriptures declare, "He that believeth not shall be damned;" infants cannot believe, and therefore must be damned: a conclusion at once discountenanced by Scripture, and abhorrent to the feelings of the real Christian. By this way of pursuing knowledge, we should arrive at the most destructive error:—we should be led to embrace a faith the most pernicious, and pursue a conduct the most barbarous. We should not only be led to believe that every infant, dying so, is sent to certain destruction in the next world, but that we should hasten their ruin by starving them in this. For the Scriptures say^a—"If

kingdom of God. If any importance is to be attached to the mere order of the words, then we should be "born of water," that is baptized in our sins, before we can be born of the Spirit, or baptized with the Holy Ghost.

^a 2 Thess. 3. 10.

any will not work, neither shall he eat." But, to follow the above mode of argument, we should immediately reply, children have no will to work, and therefore shall not eat. Thus, reason and the human race would soon perish together.—At the first glance every one must see that this reasoning is fallacious, because nothing is said about infants in the passages to which I have referred: and it is just as fallacious to assert, that infants have no right to the ordinance of Baptism, because they are not mentioned with adults, where a profession of faith and repentance is required of them in order to Baptism. Besides; if this prove any thing, it proves too much: for if faith and repentance be essential qualifications in the subjects of Baptism, then it follows that Jesus Christ ought not to have been baptized: for as he had never sinned, it was impossible that he should either repent or believe, and therefore on this supposition, he was an improper subject for Baptism. And yet the baptism of Jesus Christ is often referred to by Antipædobaptists, as a proof that repenting and believing adults only are proper subjects.* From this instance we see, that

* Reference is here made to the Baptism of Jesus Christ by John, not because I think that it has any thing to do with this controversy, but because the Baptists will insist that it has. The fact is, Christian Baptism was not then instituted as an ordinance of the Christian Church. The Baptism of John was a mere Jewish ceremony; for when the Redeemer silenced the

there is a case in which Baptism was administered to one who professed neither repentance nor faith: if so, what reason can be assigned to prove that children ought not to be baptized, though they profess neither faith nor repentance?

Should it be objected, that no one has a right to a positive Christian ordinance, but by an express command, or precedent of Apostolic origin; that there is no such command nor precedent for infant baptism,

objection which John raised against baptizing him, he said, "Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." (Matt. 3. 13—15.) Righteousness supposes a law; but what law of righteousness could Jesus here allude to? Not surely to one which he was about to institute, but to one already in being; that is, to a Jewish law, which required this mode of purifying, and not the ordinance of Christian Baptism which Jesus afterwards instituted, and which the Jews never recognised as a law of righteousness. Nothing therefore can be more absurd than for those who differ from us, to refer to the Baptism of Christ, either to prove that immersion is the mode of baptizing, or that adults are the only subjects. "Now the ceremony to which our Saviour looketh in these words, (says the learned Dr. Lightfoot) was the washing of the Priests in water, when they entered into their function, Exodus 29. 4. Levit. 8. 6. the equity of which appeared in him, when he was baptized at his entrance into his ministry. And this indeed was the manifest and proper end and reason of Christ being baptized; (legally purified) namely, that by Baptism (legal purification) he might be installed into his ministerial office." Lightfoot's Works, vol. 1. p. 476.

and therefore infants ought not to be baptized : I reply, that this argument is equally untenable with the former : for this also proves too much. By such reasoning we can prove, that females have no right to the positive institution of the Lord's Supper, because there is neither command nor precedent in the Scriptures for female communion. But notwithstanding this silence of Scripture, who doubts the right of pious females to communicate ? And where is the authority for granting the right of females to one positive Christian institution, and denying the right of infants to another, seeing that the Scriptures are equally silent on both ?—There being no express instance in the Scriptures of an infant's being baptized, is no proof against infant baptism ; especially, if we have reason to believe, as I shall afterwards prove, that the right of infants to this ordinance was never questioned in the primitive church. To speak positively against a prevailing practice, in which there is nothing unscriptural, but much that agrees with the general scope of the Sacred Oracles, merely from the circumstance of silence in Scripture about that particular, would lead us to oppose female communion, the observance of the Christian Sabbath, all modes of conducting public worship which now prevail, as well as infant Baptism ; for the latter stands on the very same ground as the former. “ There was need of a plain and open prohibition (says the learned Dr. Light-

foot) that infants and little children should not be baptized, if our Saviour would not have had them baptized. For, since it was most common in all ages foregoing that little children should be baptized, if Christ had been minded to have that custom abolished, he would have openly forbidden it. Therefore his silence, and the silence of the Scriptures on this matter, confirms Pædobaptism and continueth it unto all ages." *—Though we have an account in Scripture of the baptizing of three whole families, yet, on the principle which I am opposing you would say, there certainly was not one infant in them all, which it would require more than ordinary information to prove.

The above are the strongest arguments that can be brought against infant baptism, but they have no force:—and from the whole of what has been advanced, I conclude, there is nothing in the Scriptures REALLY against the baptism of infants.

* Works, vol. 2. page 119. The Doctor proves that it was customary amongst the Jews to baptize their children, as well as to circumcise them, from a very early period.

ARGUMENT II.

IN EXAMINING WITH CARE AND IMPARTIALITY THE SACRED SCRIPTURES, WE MEET WITH MANY PASSAGES WHICH ARE MUCH IN FAVOUR OF INFANT BAPTISM.

IN reading the word of God, our only guide in all theological researches, our minds are not left in a state of equilibrium on the subject of infant baptism; it throws many a weight into the scale, which makes it preponderate on the side of infants. We not only do not see any thing that makes against, but much that makes for their baptism.

I begin with our Lord's commission to his disciples,² which greatly favours the cause I am pleading. His words are, "Go ye therefore and teach (in the original it is DISCIPLE) all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." How would the disciples understand these words? I conceive that they must have understood them as comprehending children. "But suppose it had been said—Go teach,

² Matth. 28. 19, 20.

proselyte, all nations, circumcising them: would not the Apostles, without any further warrant, have naturally thought, that upon proselyting the Gentile parent, and circumcising him, his infants also were to be circumcised? Or, if a divine command had been given to the twelve Patriarchs of old, to go into Egypt, Arabia, &c. to teach them the God of Abraham, circumcising them; would they not, must they not have understood it as authorizing them to perform this ceremony, not upon the parents only, but also upon the infants of such as believed in the God of Abraham? without all question they would."b The Apostles then, must have understood the commission of our Lord as meaning, that parents and children were to be discipled, and therefore baptized.

In the expression "All nations," we must suppose infants included, unless there be some clause in the commission to exclude them: but we find no such clause. When adults and their infants are thus discipled, they are brought into the condition of scholars, and are to be baptized. And though adults are to be taught before Baptism, the principles of Christianity, their infant offspring, who are incapable of being taught before, are to be instructed after Baptism. For when initiated by this rite into the visible church of Christ, they are to be considered disci-

^b Towgood on Baptism, p. 20.

ples ;^c and parents, when they devote their children to God in this institution, stand engaged to train them up “ In the way they should go,” “ In the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” The plain sense of the words of our Lord appears to be, “ Go—disciple, put into the condition of my disciples, all nations, Jews and Gentiles, old and young, parents and children, by the rite of Baptism, which is the sign and means of admission into my school ; and then teach them the principles of my religion, as their several capacities enable them to receive instruction.

Another passage which favours the baptism of infants is that recorded in the Acts of the Apostles,^d where Peter alludes to the promise which God made to Abraham,^e in which covenant blessings were assured to him, and his seed, to be signified and sealed to him and them by circumcision, which then became a standing religious ordinance of initiation into the church of the Jews. Peter, speaking of the gift of the Holy Ghost, with all his saving influences, the remission of sins, and Gospel repentance, the great blessings of the covenant of grace, to be sealed and signified by Baptism as coming in the place of

^c Children are called the Lord's servants, Leviticus 25. 41, 42. and disciples, Acts 15. 10.

^d Acts 2. 38, 39.

^e Gen. 17.

circumcision, (which was the seal of the covenant under the Law,) says to his hearers who were convinced of their sins, and inquiring what they should do, "The promise is to you and to your children." Let it be remembered that Peter was addressing a very numerous audience, many of whom, without any doubt, had children. As they knew that the same promise was made to Abraham and his infant seed, they would certainly understand that this promise belonged as much to their children, as the promise made to Abraham did to his seed. For the promise is to you and to your children; not, shall be, when they are converted, but is now to them, in their present state. The promise is to you, therefore be ye baptized; the promise is to your children, therefore let them be baptized. And the promise is not confined to you and your children; no:—but it is made to "As many as the Lord your God shall call," and their children; let them be baptized. So far from any exception being made to children in reference to Baptism, they are expressly mentioned, and the promise is as much made to them as their converted parents, and therefore they have as valid a claim to Baptism.

The Scriptures give us an account of the baptizing of three whole families—that of Lydia^f; that of the

^f Acts 16. 14, 15.

Jailor;* and that of Stephanas.[†] Ancient families were often very large; how large these were, we cannot say; but they were families; and whether larger or smaller, they were all baptized; the heads of the family, the children, if there were any, and the servants. The weight of argument arising from this circumstance, is certainly on the side of probability. It cannot indeed be said there were children; for it is a possible case that there might not be any; neither can it be said that there were not children; for it is very probable that there were some: the question then is, Which is most probable, that there were not, or that there were children in these three families? Every unprejudiced mind, I conceive, will give it in favour of children. And if there was but one child in these families, that child was certainly baptized, and the

* Acts 16. 33. I here anticipate an objection which some may bring against the supposition that there were children in the household of the Jailor, because it is said that after they were baptized, "*He rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.*" To refute this objection, I need only quote a passage from Guyse's Paraphrase, in a note on this text. He says "*It may be read, He, believing in God, rejoiced all the house over; (ΠΑΝΟΙΚΙ) he went to every apartment expressing his joy. And it is evident that the words (ΕΓΑΛΛΙΑΣΑΤΟ ΤΕΠΙΣΤΕΥΚΟΣ) he having believed, rejoiced, expresses only his own, and not his family's faith and joy.*"

[†] 1 Cor. 1. 16.

cause I plead is gained. The strength of argument is clearly in favour of infants.

If the Apostle, in his Epistle to the Corinthians,^b has any reference to Christian Baptism, it is strikingly in favour of infants. “For (said he) they were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.” And it is said their little ones were with them; THEY were also baptized, for ALL were baptized unto Moses.ⁱ “There were six hundred thousand on foot that were men, besides children.” All these considerations argue strongly in favour of infant baptism.

^b 1 Cor. 10. 2.

ⁱ Exodus 12. 37.

ARGUMENT III.

THE INFANT OFFSPRING OF BELIEVING PARENTS STAND IN THE SAME RELATION TO THE GOSPEL CHURCH NOW, AS THEY DID TO THE CHURCH OF GOD UNDER THE OLD TESTAMENT DISPENSATION.

THAT God had a church under the Old Testament, no one can deny without at once rejecting the Scriptures, and dooming to perdition all the generations of four thousand years, including the most eminent saints, of whom the world was not worthy. That church did not differ essentially from the church of God now. There was, without doubt, a difference in the external form; but this did not affect the nature of the church:—it was spiritual; the blessings promised were the same, and on the same gracious terms; believers were saved in the same way, by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and by virtue of his atonement. Abraham rejoiced to see the day of Christ, he saw it and was glad. Let it then be remembered, that the church under the Old Testament dispensation, and that under the New, are not two churches, but only two parts of the same church, under the government of the

same Lawgiver. Under the former dispensation, believing parents, that is, Jews, who professed to embrace the true religion, and their infant offspring were visible members* of the church. To deny that infants were members, we must maintain that adults were not; for there is the same evidence for both, and that evidence is the testimony of the Scriptures, in which God promises that he will be a God to Abraham and his seed after him:—both parents and children were initiated into that church by the rite of circumcision.

It is undeniable then that infants enjoyed the privilege of visible membership in the church of God under the law: children were an important part of that church. Now, when Christ came into the world, if he had intended to alter the constitution of the church so materially as to reject infants entirely, and to admit adults only, we must suppose that he would have given us some information on so important a change. To leave us uninformed of this, would be to leave us ignorant of what was of the greatest concern in his church. But where does he teach us that children are to have

* A church is a society of persons, instituted for religious purposes, and standing related to Jesus Christ the Head of the church: and by VISIBLE MEMBERSHIP, we mean, an open or visible relation to that church, which supposes that those persons have been initiated into this visible relation, by the rite which is appointed for that purpose: for till that rite is performed, the visible relation is not effected.

no place in his church? And where do his Apostles enforce an attention to any intimations of that nature? There is nothing in all the Sacred Oracles that for a moment countenances such a rejection. But on the other hand, both the Redeemer and his Apostles give the clearest information that children have the same place in the church of Christ now, that they had under the Law.

Jesus said, "Suffer little children and forbid them not to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he laid his hands on them,"^a &c. Similar expressions are used in other places.^b In these passages our Lord evidently speaks of infants; for they are brought to him, and he takes them into his arms. He speaks of them as having a place in his church in this world. For the expressions, "The kingdom of heaven," and "The kingdom of God," we so frequently meet with in the Gospels, most generally mean the New Testament church;^c and Christ declares that those infants were of that kingdom. We cannot refer these expressions to the kingdom of glory, without virtually admitting this. For if the church triumphant be composed, in part, of such as these, it would be absurd to deny them a place in the church militant, which is an inferior state of the same church. From our Lord's

^a Matth. 19, 13—15.

^b Mark 10. 13.—16.

^c Matth. 21. 43.

words it is evident that he considered infants as standing in the same relation to his church then, as they did under the Law. Ignorance indeed may sneer at the thought, and say, Children are incapacitated for Church-membership: but it ought not to be forgotten that all such opposition is made against a positive divine institution; for God himself instituted the Church-membership of infants;^d if God made them members, then, I suppose, they were capable:—and it is impious to deny it: “Who art thou that repliest against God?” If children were capacitated for visible membership in the church of God under one dispensation, where is the propriety of denying them a place in the same church under another—a more gracious dispensation? To do this, it is necessary to prove that some important radical change has happened to infants, which has deprived them of their original capacity for visible Church-membership. But who will make so vain an attempt?

The Apostle Peter is of the same mind with his divine Master. Addressing a large assembly, pricked in their hearts^e, he said—“Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you and to your children (INFANTS) and to all them that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” I

^d Gen. 17.

^e Acts 2. 38. 39.

have before noticed this passage, but with a different view. This text is the same for substance as that promise which God made to Abraham and his seed.^f The promise was as much made to Abraham's seed as to himself, and sealed to both by the ordinance of circumcision. Peter considered the children of the believers whom he addressed, as standing in the very same relation to God and to his church, and as having the same right to Baptism as the seal of the new covenant, that Abraham's seed had to circumcision, which was another seal of the very same covenant; for though the seals are different, the covenant is the same. Hence said Peter, "The promise is to you and to your children." Baptism, therefore, ought to be administered to parents, who have not been baptized in their infancy, and to their infant offspring, for the promise is made equally to both.

Treating on the privileges of the infant offspring of believers, Paul declares,^g that the children of parents, one only of whom is a believer, are holy. "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband, else were your children unclean, but now are they holy. The term "Unclean" evidently refers to the state of those who are without the limits of the visible church of Christ, as was the case of the Heathen; hence Peter in his vision calls them un-

^f Gen. 17.

^g 1 Cor. 7. 14.

clean. The term "Holy," does not refer to their purity, but to their visible relationship to the church of Christ. If both parents were unbelievers, then their children were unclean, that is, Heathen, Gentiles, out of the church of Christ: but if one only of their parents was a believer, visibly related to the church of Christ, all their children were considered as "Externally, relatively and federally holy, as a seed visibly separated and appropriated to the Lord, and so entitled to all the privileges of the covenant that they are capable of in their infancy, as much as if both Father and Mother were professing believers."^h The Apostle speaking on the same subject in another place,ⁱ observes, "If the first-fruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches:"—that is, if the parent or parents belong to the church of Christ, so do the children.

In his Epistle to the Ephesians,^k the Apostle proves that Christ has broken down the middle wall of partition that stood between Jews and Gentiles, whom he calls the circumcision (the Jews) and the uncircumcision (the Gentiles,) and made both one family. Here is no rejection of either the children of the Jews, or those of the Gentiles:—the Jews and their families, the converted Gentiles and their families are embraced, and constituted one body, of which Christ is the head: one family, of which Christ is the

^h See Dr. Guyse on this text.

ⁱ Rom. 11. 16.

^k Eph. 2. 11—22.

Master. The unbelieving Jews and their families were broken off from the church, which is meant by the true olive tree, but the same description of persons shall be grafted in again,¹ which was broken off, that is, both adults and their infant offspring. As parents and children had a place in the visible church of God, before they were broken off through unbelief, so we naturally conclude, that when they are re-admitted it will be as extensively—that is, both parents and children. Under the Jewish dispensation, when the head of a family was converted from Heathenism to the true religion, he and his family were taken into the visible church by the rite of circumcision, which was then the initiating ordinance. Under the Gospel dispensation, we see the Apostles acting in the same manner, baptizing whole families, and thus taking them into the visible church of Christ, on the professed faith of the heads only of those families—knowing “That if the root be holy, so are the branches.”

From the whole we conclude, that children under the Law had a place in the visible church of God in common with their parents :—that the Scriptures so far from speaking against the Church-membership of infants under the Gospel economy, plainly declare it; and therefore the children of believing parents under the New Testament dispensation, stand in the

¹ Rom. 11.

same relation to the church of God, as under the Law, that of membership, to whom the promise is made. To suppose the contrary, and exclude children, under the present dispensation, from privileges which they enjoyed under the Law, is to narrow the privileges of the Gospel church, and make that of the Jews exceed it in glory,—which is contrary to matter of fact. On this subject Mr. MATTH. HENRY makes the following remarks, “Though God’s covenant was not established with Ishmael, yet he was circumcised; for children of believing parents, as such, have a right to the privileges of the visible church, and the seals of the covenant, whatever they may prove afterward: Ishmael is blessed, and therefore circumcised.”^m The eminent Dr. OWEN observes—“That a privilege once granted by God to any, cannot be changed, disannulled, or abrogated without, first, an especial divine revocation of it; and, secondly, the substitution of a greater mercy and privilege in the room of it.”—“All this contest (made by those who oppose infant baptism) therefore, is to deprive the children of believers of a privilege once granted to them by God, never revoked as to the substance of it, assigning nothing in its room; which is contrary to the goodness, love, and covenant of God, especially derogatory to the honour of Jesus Christ and the Gospel.”ⁿ

^m On Gen. 17. 23—

ⁿ Sermons and Tracts, p. 576.

ARGUMENT IV.

SEEING THAT THE INFANT OFFSPRING OF BELIEVING PARENTS HAVE A RIGHT TO VISIBLE MEMBERSHIP, AND THAT BAPTISM IS THE ONLY RITE OF ADMISSION TO THAT STATE, BAPTISM OUGHT TO BE ADMINISTERED TO THEM.

IT is an established fact that infants were members of the church of God under the former dispensation ; and it is equally evident that they were admitted by a religious rite, which God had instituted partly for that purpose ; that rite was circumcision. If infants under the one dispensation had a right to the initiating ordinance, who can say that they have lost their right under the other ? If they have a right to visible Church-membership, which has been proved, then it follows that they must be baptized ; for till then they cannot properly be considered members. A right of membership, and the means of membership stand inseparably connected—what God hath joined, let no man put asunder. And these the Head of the Church has joined, for he said of infants—“ Of such is the kingdom of heaven”—but, “ Except they be born of water (that is, baptized)

they cannot enter the kingdom of heaven"—and therefore infants must be baptized.

In order to resist this conclusion, we shall be put to the necessity of maintaining, that Baptism is not that under the Gospel which circumcision* was under the Law, which contradicts the Apostle, who calls Baptism circumcision, and at the same time robs the Christian church of an instituted ordinance: for if Baptism be not in the room of circumcision, and the door of admittance into the church of Christ, nothing is. The learned WITSIUS remarks—"We argue from this, that Baptism has succeeded in the room of circumcision; the Apostle declares this Coloss. 2. 11, 12, where he proves the abrogation of the ceremonial law, and especially of circumcision with respect to believers of the New Testament, from this consideration, that the spiritual thing formerly signified and sealed by Circumcision, is now signified and sealed by Baptism; intimating, that what circumcision was to the Old Testament church, the same is Baptism to the New, and in-

* There are some so exceedingly ignorant of our meaning when we speak of Baptism as coming in the place of circumcision, that they are very much alarmed for the safety of the Gospel, thinking that we want to revive Old Testament rites, under New Testament privileges. Such persons need not be afraid. We design only to run a parallel between the two ordinances. In this there can be nothing unfair, as the design of both institutions is unquestionably the same.

deed in a far more eminent and perfect manner, because Baptism is an introduction at once into the liberty and grace of the New Testament, whereas circumcision contained the profession of a bondage and yoke. But it is evident, that circumcision was administered to infants; it therefore follows, that we are to have the same sentiment concerning Baptism. And indeed nothing can be advanced against the baptism of infants, which may not equally militate against their circumcision.”^a

Under the Law there were two standing ordinances; the Passover and Circumcision. It is confessed on all hands, that the Lord’s Supper takes the place of the Passover, and yet it is denied by some, that Baptism comes in the place of Circumcision, though it is granted that both are initiating ordinances. The ordinance of Baptism agrees as well with that of Circumcision as the Lord’s Supper does with the Passover, if not better. Baptism corresponds with circumcision both in nature and design. Circumcision implied natural depravity, and the necessity of regeneration:—so does Baptism. Circumcision was the seal of the covenant, so is Baptism. Circumcision was the ordinance of initiation into the Jewish church, so is Baptism into the Christian church, or we have no initiating rite:—in

^a Economy of the Covenants, English translation, 2d. edit. vol. 2. p. 442.

circumcision the subject was devoted to God, so in Baptism the person is devoted to God,—Father, Son and Spirit. Circumcision was administered to adults and their infant offspring, when proselyted to the Jewish religion: so ought Baptism to be granted to believing adults and their infant offspring. It would be very singular if these two ordinances agreed in every thing, except in this one, viz. the application of Baptism to infants:—that though circumcision was applied to infants, yet Baptism must not, for no reason, except that it does not agree with a favourite doctrine.

Aware of the propriety of devoting their children to God, some, who oppose infant baptism, have recently done it in public, with every ceremony which we use in baptizing children, excepting the application of water. This practice is as unscriptural as it is novel.—The pious custom indeed of devoting children in their infancy to God, in a public manner, is very ancient: we find many instances of it recorded in the Old Testament, and have reason to think that it was very general, if not strictly universal, amongst the professing people of God; but I know not one case of a child's being publicly given up to the Lord, WITHOUT SOME SIGN. I shall mention a few instances. Thus Hannah: “When Elkanah her husband, and all his house went up to offer unto the Lord, the yearly sacrifice, and his vow; Hannah went not up; for she said unto her husband, I will

not go up until the child be weaned, and then I will bring him, that he may appear before the Lord, and there abide for ever." And when he was weaned, she presented him to the Lord, "With three bullocks, and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine."^b Ever after the institution of circumcision, all the male children of the Jews were devoted to God on the eighth day by its application to them. This is indisputable. And on the eighth day our Lord himself was devoted to God in this ordinance. It is remarkable, that in all cases of especial dedication to God, not only of persons, but also of things, some sign was used. Thus when the priests and kings were initiated into their office, oil was poured upon their heads. When pillars were built and consecrated to record divine interpositions, it was with the pouring of oil, or some other ceremony; many instances might be produced to establish the above fact. And it shall be proved afterwards, that the application of water to children, has been customary in all ages of the Christian church, when their parents have devoted them to God. It is universally confessed that children ought to be devoted to God. Then it must be either with, or without a sign. To maintain that a sign is unnecessary, would be contrary to the custom of all ages, from the earliest periods of the church of God to the present day. If we say it ought

^b 1 Sam. 1. 20—28.

to be with a certain sign, then that sign must be what God has appointed. Circumcision was the instituted sign under the Law, but this is now abolished. Nothing now remains but Baptism. Therefore as believers ought to devote their children to God by the application of a sign, and as no sign but Baptism exists in the New Testament church, it follows that children are to be baptized.

The whole argument assumes the following form : all those who have a right to visible church membership, have a right to Baptism, which is the only initiating ordinance ;—adult believers and their infant offspring have a right to visible church membership ; therefore adult believers and their infant offspring have a right to Baptism. To invalidate this argument, to resist this conclusion, it must be proved, either that children are incapacitated for visible membership under the Gospel, though they were not under the Law ; or that Jesus Christ has cast them out of the church, or commanded his Apostles to do so ; but to prove either is impossible. Till this is done, both the argument and conclusion will maintain their ground against all opposition.

ARGUMENT V.

CHILDREN ARE CAPABLE OF BEING TAKEN INTO A COVENANT RELATION TO GOD;—TO THEM MANY COVENANT PROMISES ARE MADE—AND THEY ARE ABLE TO PARTAKE OF THE BLESSINGS OF THE COVENANT:—IF SO, THEN IT WILL FOLLOW THAT THEY ARE FIT SUBJECTS OF BAPTISM, WHICH IS THE SEAL OF THE COVENANT.

CHILDREN are capable of being taken into a covenant relation to God.—HENRY observes, “That those may be taken into covenant with God, and receive the benefits of it, who yet are not capable of restipulating, or giving their own consent. For this covenant (which God made with Noah) is made with every living creature, every beast of the earth.”^a—But we have a more sure word of prophecy unto which we do well that we take heed; the sacred Scriptures are decisive in their testimony on this subject. “Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God; your captains of your tribes, your elders and your officers, with all the men of Israel, your LITTLE ONES,

^a See Henry on Gen. 9. 8—11.

your wives, and thy stranger that is in thy camp, from the hewer of thy wood unto the drawer of thy water; that thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into his oath, which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day: that he may establish thee to-day for a people unto himself, and that he may be unto thee a God, as he hath said unto thee, and as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.”^b—The LITTLE ONES thus taken into covenant, God claims as his own property; for when the people had so far forsaken God as to sacrifice their children to Moloch, he expostulates with them and says, “Thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters whom thou hast BORN UNTO ME, and THESE thou hast sacrificed unto them to be devoured; is this of thy whoredoms a small matter? That thou hast slain MY CHILDREN, and delivered them to cause them to pass through the fire.”^c Dr. OWEN observes—“It was the way of God from the beginning, to take children of covenanters into the same covenant with their parents; so he dealt with this people in the establishment of the first covenant, and he hath made no alteration herein in the establishment of the second.”^d

Further. As children are taken into covenant with

^b Deut. 29. 10—13.

^c Ezek. 16. 20, 21.

^d Owen on the Hebrews, vol. 3. p. 432, fol.

God in common with their parents, the promises of the covenant are made to both. In the covenant which God made with Abraham, he promises that "He will be a God to him and his seed."^e Whatever reference might be had to his spiritual seed in this promise, his natural seed was included; for Isaac and Jacob and Joseph were blessed with faithful Abraham.—By Isaiah God promises "I will pour out my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring."^f—The Apostle declares that the promise of repentance, remission of sins, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and Baptism as the sign and seal of them, is made to believers and their children.^g

Again. Children are able to participate in the blessings of the covenant, even all the blessings promised in the passages which I have just quoted. The blessings are such as regeneration, pardon, justification, holiness, the kingdom of heaven, eternal life. That infants are capable of partaking of these blessings, no one can deny, without at once defying the power of God, and sentencing every infant that dies to eternal misery: for, in admitting their salvation, we at the same time admit whatever is necessary to it; and it is essential to the salvation of infants that they should be partakers of the graces

^e Gen. 17. 7.

^f Isa. 44. 3.

^g Acts, 2. 38, 39.

of the Spirit, faith, love, repentance, &c. Though they are unable actually to exercise them, yet that divine nature, in which they are included, must be possessed in order to their salvation. Not only so, but their original sin must be pardoned, their persons must be justified, their natures must be regenerated and sanctified, before they can be made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.—The truth of the proposition which I am endeavouring to prove, appears further evident from the very consideration, that they are taken into covenant relation with God, and that he has made them special promises of covenant blessings; for it is absurd to suppose that God would make promises of spiritual blessings to creatures who were incapacitated for the reception of them. But in order that these blessings may be conferred, and this meetness for glory effected, it is essentially necessary that the Holy Ghost should be poured out; children must partake of his divine influences; and the Apostle shews^h that those who are partakers of the Holy Ghost are fit subjects of Baptism, whether they are infants or adults. But infants must be partakers of the Holy Ghost in order to be holy, &c.; if so, then it follows, that infants are proper subjects of Baptism.

Besides; the kingdom of heaven is promised to

^h Acts, 10. 47.

infants, and the Redeemer declares that it belongs to such. Take the expression "The kingdom of heaven," as meaning either the kingdom of grace or the kingdom of glory, it makes little difference:—to deny children Baptism then, would be to make it of greater moment than the kingdom of heaven; for if children have a right to the greater, it is absurd to deny them the less. As all those to whom the kingdom of heaven belongs must be proper subjects of Baptism, and as the kingdom of heaven belongs to infants, it therefore follows that infants are to be baptized.

In two passages, at which I have before glanced, the Apostle declares, that the children of believing parents are "Holy."ⁱ The term "Holy," must be understood as referring either to real purity of nature, or to visible relationship to God. View it in either acceptance, and it makes equally for the baptism of the infant offspring of professing parents. If we take it in the former sense, as denoting PURITY, then it follows that children have a right to Baptism; for to withhold the SIGN from those who possess the THING signified by it, would be the height of folly and absurdity. If we understand it in the latter meaning, as intending visible relationship to God, or the being set apart to him, then the consequence will be the same; because Baptism is essential to that relationship, as it

ⁱ 1 Cor. 7. 14. Rom. 11. 16.

does not visibly exist till the rite of initiation is performed.—I am aware that some have understood the term “Holy,” when applied to children here, as meaning that they were legitimate, and not bastards. But such a construction is too contemptible to deserve further notice.

No one can deny, that those whom the Scriptures call the servants of God and disciples, are proper subjects of Baptism. But that the children of professing parents are spoken of as such, is certain. God, giving direction concerning the conduct of the rich Israelites towards their brethren, who might be reduced to a state of servitude, says to the master—“Then (in the year of jubilee) shall he depart from thee, both he and his children with him;” and the reason is assigned in the next verse, “For they are my servants.”* Here it is evident that God calls both the Father and the Children his servants. That they are called disciples is equally certain. Hence said Peter, when contending against the introduction of circumcision under the Gospel dispensation, “Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?” Which words Dr. Guyse paraphrases thus; “And why should ye attempt to put a yoke of bondage upon Gentile believers, and their seed, by obliging them to be circumcised, who,

* Levit. 25. 41, 42.

under the Gospel state, are to be considered as disciples of Christ, in like manner as children were reckoned with their parents, to belong to the church of Israel under the Mosaic economy?" Whom does the Apostle mean by the fathers, on whom this yoke was imposed? Undoubtedly the Jews, both parents and children; for both were circumcised. And now it was the wish of the believers who had been brought from the sect of the Pharisees, to impose this yoke also upon the Gentiles who had embraced the Gospel, and their seed, whom the Apostle here calls DISCIPLES.¹—As those whom the Scriptures call the servants of God and disciples are confessed to be proper subjects of Baptism; and as the professing people of God and their infant seed are thus denominated; it unavoidably follows, that both are equally the subjects of this ordinance.

The whole of the argument may be placed in the following form. Those who are taken into a covenant relation to God, to whom special covenant promises are made, and on whom the blessings of the covenant are conferred, are proper subjects of Baptism; this no one can deny: but such are the privileges of the infant offspring of believing parents, or they cannot be saved; it follows therefore that the infant offspring of believers are proper subjects of Baptism.

¹ Acts, 15. 10.

To get rid of this conclusion, we must deny that infants stand in any covenant relation to God, or that any covenant promises are made to them, or that they can possibly partake of the blessings of grace and of glory, which I presume none but those who deny the authority of the Scriptures, or those who are ignorant of their contents, will venture to attempt.

ARGUMENT VI.

IT CAN BE PROVED FROM THE CLEAREST HISTORIC RECORDS, THAT CHILDREN HAVE, IN ALL AGES OF THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION, BEEN RECEIVED INTO THE VISIBLE CHURCH BY BAPTISM.

IN making the following quotations from the writings of the Fathers, it is not to be understood that we place the least dependence on their AUTHORITY in this ordinance:—the Fathers, as they are called, have no authority whatever to introduce or decree rites and ceremonies for the future observance of the church of Jesus Christ:—we refer to them merely to establish an historic fact, and to ascertain what was the custom of the primitive church, in the respective periods in which they wrote. Several attempts have been made to invalidate the antiquity of the following quotations, but these attempts have been vain, and they yet stand the test of all opposition.

It is utterly unnecessary to produce any historic evidence after the sixth century, because no one can for a moment deny, that infant baptism has pre-

vailed since that period.^a I shall therefore begin from that time, and go down to the days of the Apostles, and show, that infant baptism prevailed generally in the Christian church in its earliest and most pure periods.^b

I begin with AUSTIN, who lived about three hundred years after the Apostles. He writes against PELAGIUS, who maintained that children were born free from any defilement. Austin pleads against him the universal practice of baptizing infants, which implied their depravity, and observes—"That infants are by all Christians acknowledged to stand in need of Baptism, which must be for original sin, since they have no other."—Again; he says—"If they have no sin, why are they accepted to the usage of the church baptism? Why are they washed with the laver of regeneration,^c if they have no defilement?"—PELA-

^a It has been sometimes objected to infant baptism, that it was the invention of Popery. But the following testimonies will prove, that infants were baptized before Popery existed. Therefore, it is as absurd to say, that this practice originated in Popery, as to say, that the effect existed before the cause.

^b For the following authorities, see Dr. Wall's History of Infant Baptism, and his Defence.

^c Let it be observed, that the term regeneration is often used by the fathers for Baptism; with what propriety is no concern of mine. I need only quote the words of two of them to prove this. Thus IRENÆUS—"When Christ gave

GIUS, being charged by some with denying infant baptism, was highly offended, and said, "Men SLANDER me, as if I denied Baptism to infants;" this he calls a SLANDER, because a thing he abhorred. The same AUSTIN, writing against the DONATISTS, says, "If any ask for divine authority in the matter of infants being baptized, though that which the whole church practises, and which has not been instituted by Councils, but was ever in use, is very reasonably believed to be no other than a thing delivered by the authority of the Apostles; yet (continues he) we may take a true estimate how much Baptism avails infants, by the circumcision which God's former people received."^d It is evident then that the Baptism of infants was universally practised in the days of AUSTIN, about three hundred years after the Apostles.

The martyr CYPRIAN was made overseer of the churches at Carthage, about two hundred and forty-

his disciples the command of regenerating unto God, he said, go teach (make disciples of) all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."—The following are the words of JUSTIN MARTYR, who was contemporary with IRENÆUS—"They are regenerated in the same way in which we have been regenerated, for they are washed with water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."

^d Here it is plain, that the fathers considered Christian Baptism, as coming in the place of, and signifying the same thing as circumcision.

eight years after the birth of Christ. A question was started in his time, whether infants might be baptized before they were eight days old. To decide this question, he called a council of ministers, sixty-six in number, all of whom unanimously agreed, that Baptism ought not to be delayed till the eighth-day. A long letter was written to this purpose, to satisfy all who were in doubt respecting this question, signed by CYPRIAN, in the name of all the rest. Infant Baptism was therefore universal about one hundred and fifty years after the Apostles.

TERTULLIAN, who lived about one hundred years after the Apostles, entertaining an idea that sins committed after Baptism, were nearly, if not utterly unpardonable, speaks against infant baptism on this account, and advises that it should not be administered till after marriage. But had it not been a prevailing custom to baptize infants at that period, he could not have spoken against the practice:—besides, even HE allows it in certain cases, as when the child was in danger of death.

ORIGEN was born about the year of Christ, one hundred and eighty-three, within one hundred years of the Apostles; both his father and grandfather were Christians, who must have lived, either at the time of the Apostles, or a very few years after. ORIGEN was a man of profound learning; he preached the Gospel at Rome, in Greece, in Palestine, and in Syria; and therefore must have been acquainted

with the custom of the church in the days of the Apostles. He uses the argument of the baptism of infants to prove original sin, in a controversy on that subject. This he could not have done, if the practice had not been universally prevalent. His words are these—"The baptism of children is given for the forgiveness of sins; but why, says he, are infants by the usage of the church baptized, if they have nothing that wants forgiveness?" And he further adds—"It is because, by the sacrament of Baptism the pollution of our birth is taken away, that infants are baptized." And in his comment on the Epistle to the Romans, declares that they received it from the Apostles. His remarkable words are—"THE CHURCH HAD ALSO FROM THE APOSTLES AN ORDER TO GIVE BAPTISM TO INFANTS; for they to whom divine mysteries were committed, knew that there was in all persons, a natural pollution, which ought to be washed away by water and the Spirit."—In the above passage, this learned man takes it for granted, being a universal custom in the church, that infants were baptized, and makes use of it to prove another doctrine—that of original sin.

The next I shall mention, is IRENÆUS, who, as is generally supposed, was born before the death of John, and was acquainted with Polycarp, who was John's disciple: it was impossible that he could be mistaken about the usage of the church in reference to the baptism of infants. The doctrine not having

then been a matter of contention, he only mentions it transiently. His words are these—"Christ came to save those who by him are regenerated unto God (that is, baptized), both infants, and little ones, and young men, and elderly persons."

JUSTIN MARTYR wrote about forty years after the apostolic age; he says—"Several persons among us, both men and women, of sixty or seventy years old, who were proselyted, or made disciples to Christ in or from their infancy, do continue uncorrupt."—They could not be proselyted to Christ without being baptized, for this is our Lord's express command, "Disciple, or proselyte all nations, baptizing them."—Seventy years back from Justin Martyr, brings us nearly into the middle of the apostolic age.

"Now, if all the churches throughout the world were really established by the Apostles upon the plan of only adult baptism, and they every where rejected infants, and forbade them to be baptized, it will appear a thing absolutely inconceivable, and even a moral IMPOSSIBILITY, that the baptism of infants should so early, so widely, so universally prevail throughout the whole world, as we have now seen it to have done." The same sensible author, from whom I have made the above quotation, in another place observes—"Suppose a few persons were of so odd a turn of mind, as to run into this novel, and unheard-of practice of baptizing infants, can it be imagined that WHOLE

CHURCHES would be led blindly away by them? Or if whole churches might be thus seduced, could WHOLE NATIONS be so too? Yea, if whole nations might, can it enter into the heart of any reasonable man, that ALL THE NATIONS of the Christian world, both the eastern and western churches, in the space of about two hundred years, universally fell in with this anti-apostolic, and new-invented rite of worship: and so strangely apostatized from the primitive and pure doctrine of Christ as to this matter! It were the height of absurdity even to surmise such a thing."

The testimony of the fathers is decidedly in favour of infant baptism, even from the days of the apostles. If infant baptism had been an innovation, a doctrine newly invented, those holy men of God would have treated it as such. But the way in which they speak of it, is an evidence that no one disputed the fact. They certainly considered themselves as walking in the steps, and following the example of the Apostles in this particular. Should it be said—"Is it not strange that we no where find children mentioned, if it were the Apostles' custom to baptize them with their parents?—And is it not equally strange that we no where find that the children of believers were baptized after they were grown up? There is no example of this kind." "The history of the Acts contains a period of above thirty years; and the New Testament a much longer period. There was time enough for two or three generations of infants to grow up to adult age. We

have all along accounts of Baptism. But it is remarkable, that in all this time there is no intimation of ANY ONE of the children of the early believers being baptized after he was grown up; or that any one of those adults whom the Apostles baptized, was born of believing parents.”†

These are facts of great importance in this controversy, and which ought to be well considered. In the above quotations from the writings of the Fathers, we meet with some uncouth sentiments respecting other things—but respecting the facts of an historic nature, to which they are called in to give their evidence, they are all of one mind in proving, that infant baptism universally prevailed in the Christian church in its earliest and most pure periods—even from the days of the Apostles. As it was impossible for infant baptism, had it been an error, to have obtained so universally, in so short a period as a century or a little more, we must conclude, that it was practised by the Apostles themselves, and therefore it ought to be practised by us.

† Dr. Lathrop.

CONCLUSION.

FROM a review of the evidences which have been produced in support of infant baptism, we see—that there is nothing in all the Scriptures that REALLY opposes the practice—that there are many passages of Scripture much in favour of it—that the infant offspring of believing parents stand in the same relation to the Gospel church, as they did to the church of God under the Law, that of visible membership—that as they have a right to visible church membership, and as Baptism is the only rite of initiation, they must be baptized—that children are capable of partaking of the blessings of the covenant, and therefore have a right to the seal of the covenant, which is Baptism—and that this has been the practice of the church of Christ in all ages, even from the days of the Apostles. This fact is supported by the testimony of AUSTIN, three hundred years after the Apostles:—CYPRIAN, one hundred and fifty years after the Apostles:—TERTULLIAN, one hundred years after the Apostles:—ORIGEN, within one hundred years after the Apostles:—IRENÆUS, who was born before the death of John the Apostle and Evangelist:—and JUSTIN MARTYR, who wrote about forty

years after the Apostles.—Such is the evidence on which we rest, in administering Baptism to infants ; evidence, which never has been, which never can be invalidated.*

* Mr. Bicheno, in his *Glance at the History of Christianity*, p. 11, informs us, that the foundation of the first Baptist church which was formed in England, was laid Sept. 12, 1633, one hundred and eighty years ago only.

AN ADDRESS

TO

THOSE WHO PROFESS RELIGION.

THE preceding pages contain the reasons for our administering Baptism to the infant offspring of parents professing Christianity, by the sprinkling of water upon them in the name of the Sacred Trinity: reasons which, after the most mature and candid reflection, I deem sufficient to justify our conduct. Taking it for granted, that my readers are professors of the religion of Jesus, I shall close this Essay by addressing to them a few observations suited to their circumstances—AS CANDIDATES FOR AN ETERNAL WORLD:—AS STANDING AT THE HEAD OF FAMILIES:—AND AS BEARING A SACRED RELATION TO EACH OTHER. The subject which has been discussed suggests a train of thoughts suited to each of these particulars.

FIRST. YE ARE CANDIDATES FOR AN ETERNAL WORLD, and must shortly appear before the Judge of quick and dead. Personal, experimental, and practical religion is essential both to your present peace and your future felicity;—without this you would be ashamed and confounded before God, and must perish for ever as his enemies. It is lamentable that though the doc-

trine of Baptism most loudly teaches the necessity of a renovation of soul by the mighty operations of the Spirit of God, yet it is too generally considered as a matter of bare speculation, and discussed in the spirit of contention and vain jangling. Thus speculation is substituted in the place of vital religion, and a vain-glorious spirit takes the precedence of humble solicitude that the soul may be created anew in Christ Jesus. These things ought not to be.—Professors of religion, while you are justly concerned to be rooted and grounded in your principles, and to be able to give a reason for the hope that is in you, recollect, that unless your principles be implanted in a renewed heart, and influence you to the love and practice of holiness, they will be of no saving advantage to you, however true in themselves.

You were baptized. Your parents devoted you to God. It was believed that you were depraved by nature, that it was essential to your salvation that you should be baptized with the Holy Ghost, and that God had an equitable claim upon you. Your parents discharged, so far, the duty of their high vocation. But Baptism is not regeneration; a profession of the Christian name may be supported without possessing the true image of the Son of God; pious parents may conscientiously discharge their obligations to their offspring, and yet their offspring may perish for want of the faith of their pious parents.—I therefore solemnly warn you of the insufficiency of

a form of godliness without its power, and of your danger in having a name to live, while you are dead in trespasses and sins.—Suffer me to propose a few serious interrogations to your consideration. You were conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity; but what reason have you to hope that your pollution has been removed by the renovating influences of the Holy Spirit? You were devoted to God in Baptism; but have you presented yourselves as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service? You were instructed in the first principles of the Oracles of God; but have these principles taught you that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, you should live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this world. You name the name of Christ; but do you depart from all iniquity? It is appointed unto all men once to die, and after this the judgment; but are you prepared for a dying hour, and the judgment day? Beloved brethren, be ye ready, for, in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh.

SECONDLY. I will now suppose you **STANDING AT THE HEAD OF FAMILIES**. It is an important post which you fill! Great is your responsibility! Surrounded by your children and domestics, who are in a great measure governed by what they see in you, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness! Your whole demeanour ought to be that of pious circumspection. Your spirit

will be imbibed by your children. They will adopt your language. Your actions they will imitate. Wonder not at a want of propriety in them, if they discover in you sinful levity, worldly conformity, and a want of religion. Unless the root be holy, it is folly to expect purity in the branches.

An attention to parental duties can not begin too early. Amongst the first, is that of devoting your children to God by fervent prayer, and the application of the instituted rite. Under the Old Testament economy, that rite was circumcision, which was to be performed on the eighth day: this is abolished, and baptism takes its place. As I have already proved, it has been the pious custom of the followers of the Lamb in all ages of the Christian church, to devote their tender offspring to a God in covenant by the application of it to them; this is your duty. Mr. Matthew Henry observes—"Omissions are sins, and must come into judgment, and particularly the contempt and neglect of the seals of the covenant; for it is a sign that we undervalue the promises of the covenant, and are displeased with the conditions of it. He that has made a bargain, and is not willing to seal and ratify it, we may justly suspect, neither likes it, nor designs to stand to it. God takes notice of, and is much displeased with, the sins of his own people; if they neglect their duty, let them expect to hear of it by their consciences, and perhaps to feel from it by cross providences; for this cause many

are sick and weak ;” * and may not I add, contentious too ?

Having thus devoted your children to God, it will be your duty to pour into their opening minds the solemn truths which their baptism suggests. Hence you may take an opportunity of impressing their minds with a sense of their natural depravity—the necessity of the new birth in order to the enjoyment of heaven—and the importance of dedicating themselves cheerfully to God. These are arguments to enforce early and personal religion, of the most impressive kind, of which you would entirely deprive yourselves by a neglect or contempt of this ordinance. After this solemn dedication of your tender offspring to God, follows a variety of important duties, such as religious instruction, constant prayer for them, &c. the consideration of which I wave, as not being immediately connected with the subject in hand ; and pray that the only wise God our Saviour, may give you understanding in all things ; that you may maintain a conscience void of offence towards God and your children, and finally give up your solemn domestic charge with joy and not with grief.

THIRDLY. Professing Christians, YE BEAR A SACRED RELATION TO EACH OTHER : though sustaining different denominations among men, and connected with different societies, yet ye are but one body. Ye are members one of another. How dishonourable

* Henry on Exodus iv. 24—31.

to Jesus, the Head, for schisms to exist in the body, whose members ought to be in the most perfect peace, and exercise the most affectionate sympathy.—When I take a review of the history of the Church, from the time that the controversy of baptism was first agitated in England, (one hundred and eighty years ago,) when I consider the contentions it has occasioned, the separations in happy and prosperous Churches, the rancour and animosities in the hearts and tempers of professors, and the dishonour it has brought upon the name of Jesus, I stand confounded, and with amazement inquire, “Are these Christians? Are these the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus? It cannot be! All this sin is committed in the defence of what the sensible of both parties confess is a non-essential. Let the time past suffice. Agree while you differ. When you discuss the point, let religion influence your hearts, and the word of God determine all your decisions. But if you must differ “Let all bitterness and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice. And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ’s sake, hath forgiven you.”

FINIS.







